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ABSTRACT

A large research project on state governance and coordination of higher education is introduced. Attention is directed to the objectives, intellectual roots, and interdisciplinary scope of research that is necessary on the topics of state higher education executive officers, their agencies, and their boards. Following a brief review of relevant literature, findings are presented related to a survey of state higher education executive officers, their orientations toward task performance, formal responsibilities, representation, leadership, expertise, and decision referents. Emphasis is placed on basic types of role strains and incongruences, as well as various political characteristics bearing on role in the context of campus, legislative, and executive relationships. The findings indicate a primacy of political roles, significant legislative and executive branch interaction, substantial variation in types of political roles, wide latitude for leadership initiative, divergent perspectives on representation of various interests, and the existence of fundamental role strains and conflicts inherent in the intermediary position of higher education governing and coordinating boards in the American states. (SW)

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POSTSECONDARY EDUCATIONAL GOVERNANCE AMONG THE STATES: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ROLES OF STATEWIDE EXECUTIVE OFFICERS AND THEIR BOARDS

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POSTSECONDARY EDUCATIONAL GOVERNANCE AMONG THE STATES: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ROLES OF STATEWIDE EXECUTIVE OFFICERS AND THEIR BOARDS*

The purpose of this paper is to introduce a large research project on state governance and coordination of higher education. We identify the objectives, intellectual roots and interdisciplinary scope of the effort, discuss theoretical and practical justifications central to the inquiry, and review fundamental research questions and design. The paper concludes with an examination of some initial descriptive findings which relate to our underlying theoretical orientations.

The objectives of the larger research project are to 1) investigate the background and recruitment pathways of state higher education executive officers; 2) assess the characteristics and attitudes of members of state governing and coordinating boards; 3) define the relationships of CEOs and board members, including their perceptions of each other's role, powers and responsibilities; 4) define the relationships of executive officers and board members to key persons in the executive branch, the legislative arena, and individual campuses within their jurisdiction; and 5) assess state-by-state variations in these background characteristics and role relationships in terms of differences in powers and formal responsibilities of the statewide agency.

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In this initial stage of our analysis we offer a broad picture, briefly allude to the rather limited body of relevant literature, and treat the theoretical concerns tentatively. We present a justification of why this might be a useful and interesting concern to several academic disciplines -- and indeed, why it must be of concern to a large number of us in academe for both practical and scientific reasons. In the process, we offer an examination of something about which we all know too little.

Without space for a detailed examination of literature on the topic, it is nevertheless safe to contend that the broader research community's collective knowledge of postsecondary educational governance in the American states is highly idiosyncratic, derived from case-studies, and unusually devoid of theoretical, empirical or scientific concerns. Yet statewide governance or coordination of some type is now in place everywhere, and its agencies are of critical importance for contemporary higher education. It is time that we know as much as possible about them and it is preferable that we know it from a scientific perspective.

Generally, the topic has attracted piecemeal concern by only a few persons in several appropriate disciplines, and it has not yet attracted rigorous empirical scrutiny. Within the various fields of education, especially educational administration and its more specialized and developing subfield of higher education, there tends to be an habitual prescriptive orientation in writing about statewide governance. This describes the perspectives of both practitioners and academics, each of whom tend to write in rhetorical fashion about either the need for control and coordination or about its stranglehold on institutional autonomy. Another logical place to find an interest in the subject is within the social, behavioral and managerial sciences. While these disciplines may be

rich in theory of potential relevance to our concerns here, there is little of direct substantive bearing. Sociologists have studied the public schools, not so much from the perspective of education per se, but as a laboratory for broader theory-building, and while the "sociology of education" treats some topics of tangential relevance, higher education has received short shrift. Within political science, where the charge of political issues ought to stimulate inquiry, there has been almost no attention to the politics of higher education at the state level. Political science has adapted certain aspects of organizational theory from sociology and the managerial sciences, including its own public administration off-shoot, yet as a discipline it is only now beginning to direct attention to state-level bureaucracies, and none of the studies has regarded education at the postsecondary level. Within the relatively well-developed subfield of comparative state politics, we are provided knowledge about governors, legislators, political parties, and the mass public, yet there have been few glimpses of particular relevance to the higher education policy arena.

An interdisciplinary subfield which we could define as "the politics and administration of higher education" is weakly developed in the context of a somewhat broader and still developing field of the politics of education. As an illustration, in the single most extensive bibliography on the politics of education (which includes a section describing over 40 formative and comprehensive books which define the field), only two percent of the citations treat the role of state governance in postsecondary education (Hastings, 1980).

In addition, this field, while rich in practitioners' insights, appears to be theoretically barren and devoid of the empirical or scientific

attention one expects from even the weakest standards normally applied in the social sciences. Although our own theoretical concerns will be elaborated in subsequent reports, we should note here that our primary theoretical cluster draws from organization theory, public policy analysis, role theory, and traditional career and recruitment analysis. A concern for role relationships is predominant, yet there will also be attention to building theories of "intermediary agencies" and attempting to test theories of "organizational loose-coupling" in a particular framework for decision-making. We shall also examine policy outcomes in relation to patterns of organization for higher education governance and organization, and will look as well at how policy is affected by variations in demographic, economic, political, cultural, and financial characteristics of the American states.

Project PEGASUS -- an acronym for Postsecondary Educational Governance Among the States/U.S. -- attempts to fill our knowledge gap on the governance of postsecondary education in the states by analyzing a host of background measures of statewide organizations for higher education coordination and governance, complemented by systematic surveys of state higher education executive officers, persons who have served in such positions previously, and members of governing and coordinating boards in the states. It will provide systematic comparative information on the missions of such agencies, role relationships, and the relationships between state governing agencies and their boards, the campuses, and executive and legislative actors.

JUSTIFICATIONS

As a model of democratic pluralism, the American polity juggles and balances competing values on the way toward making policy and promoting due process. In public higher education, for example, we celebrate the diversity of our colleges and universities, routinely invoke the principle of institutional autonomy, and sanctify the assumptions that we are diverse and autonomous and that we are strong and great because of it. On the other hand, in pursuit of the "public interest", our organized politics require the orchestration of competing interests, government by compromise, occasional doses of public regulation, public scrutiny, and accountability for the receipt and expenditure of public funds. To a large extent, these public interest values impel us toward standardization and control even while we continue to venerate diversity and autonomy.

Educators have little trouble understanding that in the view of one who has devoted his/her life to the Academy, whatever actions serve higher education or promote one's own institution surely must be in the public interest, and that only those who are appropriately credentialed can determine what those things are. However, the broader perspective of the public servant, surely subscribed to by politicians, is that higher education is but one of a number of claimants on the public purse (none of which can have all that it wants), and that higher education quite often has seemed to be a cacaphonous band marching on the capitol, with each institution playing its own tune, oblivious to the existence of other scores. In the language of functional analysis, higher education traditionally has been adept at interest articulation, but inept at interest aggregation.

As long as public higher education existed on a limited scale in standard compartments (flagship, land-grant, normal schools), the clash of these two sets of values probably did not present an unmanageable situation for the states. But during the last twenty-five years, which saw enormous growth in the number of students, establishment of new junior and senior institutions and expansion of the missions of others, a more widespread recognition of the importance of higher education's role in promoting both economic development and social justice, and especially an increase in tax revenues necessary to support public colleges and universities, the states began to devise strategies for more effective control of institutional growth and greater coordination or even unification of college and university budget requests. By now, consolidated statewide governing boards or state coordinating boards and agencies exist in all states but Wyoming, which has only one senior university.

The executive officers of these relatively new structures provide a leadership nexus between the academic and political worlds, and each could well be, in his or her respective state, the single most influential person affecting the support and direction of public higher education. Yet, no matter which recruitment path -- academic, political or bureaucratic -- led them to these positions, the perception of their identity remains unclear. As one of them put it to us, "The enigma of my position is that I have many clients and no constituency. In the exercise of my responsibility, I variously represent the interests of the Governor, the Legislature, the (university) presidents, and the 'public' -- and yet I am neither appointed by nor perceived to speak authoritatively for any of them."

These "SHEEOs", as they are called, are the men and women who deal directly, as the raison d'etre of their positions, with those value

conflicts in the American political culture that affect higher education: diversity and autonomy versus standardization and control. It would be difficult to argue that any other position, at least in public higher education, could be as critical as these to the resolution of such conflicts or the shaping of state higher education profiles. Yet, aside from the very recent study of selected states by Millett (1984), there is no scholarly or even journalistic analysis of these positions and their occupants.

Literature on the campus presidency has provided general descriptions of that position, and its patterns of recruitment, sources of stress and prescriptions for success (Ferrari, 1975; Kaufman, 1980; Carbone, 1981; Cole, 1976; Duea, 1981). In addition, there are studies of governance which discuss the responsibilities of boards of trustees and their relationships to the president (Rauh, 1969; Nason, 1974; Cleary, 1979; Gomberg and Atelsek, 1977; Cowley, 1980; Ingram, 1980). Overwhelmingly, the literature of this kind presumes the standard independent sector model, with each institution having its own governing board and the president reporting directly to the board without a higher layer of administrative authority.

That model is not typical of the public sector, and has not been for a good number of years. Comprehensive studies of governance and leadership in higher education need to include some analysis of the new leadership positions that have emerged along with patterns of statewide coordination of public universities.

A growing body of literature, beginning with the seminal works of Glenny (1959), Millard (1976), and Berdahl (1971), has focused on the movement among the states to group public institutions into systems, and to create state-level coordinating boards and agencies. But none of

these studies of coordination has investigated the recruitment patterns, norms, role interpretation or behavioral choices of the very persons who give definition to the statewide governing or coordinating process. We have no literature by which to compare these administrators either to campus presidents or to heads of state government agencies (e.g., Hebert and Wright, 1982; Wright, Wagner and McAnaw, 1977), nor do we have data that allow us to determine what factors may account for variations among the states in the characteristics of persons called to such positions.

A primary purpose in launching "Project PEGASUS" was to fill the void, to develop a thorough, empirically grounded understanding of state higher education executive officers and their relationships to both government and academia. We began the study with an interest in the extent to which statewide higher education executives experience what we have chosen to call "normative ataxia" as they regularly attempt to respond to the inharmonious expectations of the state and the academy. It occurred to us in this vein that no matter how academic their backgrounds or self concept, they may feel cavalierly dismissed by others in higher education as essentially non-academic state bureaucrats. If that were true, we wanted to know why. Is it a perception widely held of executives of some kinds of boards, but not of others? Is it a factor in some states but not in others, regardless of the kind of statewide board? Has the recruitment pathway to these positions been political in some settings, bureaucratic in others, and academic in still others? Have the state executive officers for higher education in some settings regarded themselves essentially as agents of state government while in other jurisdictions they have performed as spokesmen for colleges and universities? Or is it more common that these persons face an unmanageable set of conflicting expectations from Governors,

legislators, university presidents, faculty, students and others (including their own board members) that immerses them in unavoidable controversy and virtually guarantees them a short tenure in office?

As we posed these and a great many other questions, we were interested also in changes over time and decided to include within the study the former occupants of these positions as well as the incumbents. We reasoned that the rate of turnover in such jobs should have resulted in a substantial pool of "alumni", whose responses might allow us to identify any trends in both the circumstances of the positions and the kinds of persons attracted to them.

There are several kinds of higher education executives whose authority extends to more than one campus, or who report to boards with multicampus jurisdiction. In deciding how to limit our broader interests, we determined first to include only the public sector, as the interplay of governmental and academic prerogative at the state level would be so central to us. Second, we are concerned here with those higher education executive officers whose jurisdiction is statewide. There are two general models (each with variations) of these state-level positions: the governing model and the coordinating model.

The Governing Model. In this model, all public senior colleges and universities within a state are grouped within a single, statewide system, governed by a state board of regents or trustees through a central office and system staff. There are two variations on this type: 1). The executive - where the board hires a chief executive officer of the statewide system, to whom the campus executive officers usually report. The title of a "system head" may be "President" as in North Carolina and Wisconsin, or "Chancellor" as in Maine and Georgia, or, in a confusing departure, "Commissioner of

Higher Education" as in Montana. 2). The administrator - where the chief of staff in the system office does not have line authority over campus presidents, but directs the Board's secretariat (also see Millett, 1984: 102, 129). The title may be "Executive Director" as in Idaho and Arizona, or "Executive Secretary" as in Iowa.

The Coordinating Model. Nearly every state without a statewide governing board has established a state coordinating board. These vary considerably in the extent of their formal powers. Some have jurisdiction over matters affecting only public institutions (both senior and junior colleges), while others have some coordinating functions that extend to the independent sector as well. Some are limited essentially to planning and issuing reports and recommendations to the Governor or legislature. The more powerful boards (and their staffs), on the other hand, have life-or-death power over academic programs, must approve capital construction projects, and may even have consolidated budget authority. Generally the weaker of these boards have been called "advisory," and the stronger have been called "regulatory" (Berdahl, 1971; Millard, 1976; Millett, 1984). The chief executive officers of state coordinating boards may be titled "Executive Director" as in Colorado, "Director" as in California, "Commissioner of Higher Education" as in Texas and Louisiana, or, to muddy the taxonomy a bit, "Chancellor" as in New Jersey, Ohio and Oklahoma.

The more powerful coordinating boards have authority resembling that of a statewide governing board in those areas where they have jurisdiction (Berve, 1983). The important difference, of course, is in the range or scope of authority: the governing board typically hires and fires presidents, is the final authority in personnel matters, approves budgets,

and sets policy for its institutions in matters from intercollegiate athletics to student conduct to admission and graduation requirements. Coordinating boards do not become involved in these management functions, but exercise their influence through academic program approval, budget recommendations and recommendations on capital construction projects. Unlike the statewide system head, the executive officer of a coordinating board does not "outrank" the campus presidents within a single administrative hierarchy. But he/she inevitably is an important force with which the presidents must reckon.

Since 1954 there has been an organization, weak and diffuse for a number of years, but increasingly coherent and influential -- the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) association -- which draws its membership from these state-level executives, each of whom, as mentioned earlier, is referred to as "the SHEEO" in his or her respective state.

Generally, the existence of a consolidated statewide governing board obviates the need for a coordinating board, especially if the governing board has at least coordinating responsibilities for the state's community colleges in addition to managing the senior colleges and universities. But in four states there coexist relatively new coordinating boards and statewide governing boards that control, through a chancellor and his/her staff, all public senior colleges and universities within a single, statewide system. In those states - Alaska, Florida, New Hampshire, and Oregon - the SHEEO organization has chosen to include within its membership the executive officers of the coordinating boards. Since we are concerned with all statewide higher education executives, and will be especially attentive to any differences between governing board and coordinating board

executives, we decided to include both types of executives for each of those four states.

We also developed a separate instrument for lay members of statewide boards. Our obvious purpose was to assess differences in perspective between board members and executive officers, and to determine what variables may account for opinion differences among board members. Information from the board questionnaires is essentially contextual, as the primary focus of the study is the statewide executive officers. We believe it important, however, to be able to measure the extent to which board attitudes and characteristics constrain decision and behavioral choices of the executive officers. Furthermore, such boards have never been systematically studied on a national scale, and there is no central compilation of their memberships.

In what is essentially a "pre-data" phase of our discussion, it is possible to give a sense of impression about the subjects and our expectations about them, which conveys in turn an explanation of why we think a study of this kind is overdue. First, we would argue that the functions generally performed by SHEEO agencies are viewed by governors and legislators as essential matters of state attention. Someone needs to manage student financial assistance programs, license postsecondary proprietary schools, conduct statewide higher education planning, specify institutional missions, review and approve instructional programs, promote inter-institutional cooperation and school-college articulation, recommend appropriations, etc. If these tasks were not assigned to a state higher education agency of some sort, it is most probable that they would be performed by non-academic staff of state legislatures or of control agencies such as state budget and planning offices. In contrast to those

critics of state regulation who fail to distinguish between higher education agencies on the one hand and conventional state agencies on the other, we believe it fair to expect that state coordination of colleges and universities by academics should be conducted more sympathetically and with more understanding of the campuses than similar coordination or regulation by non-academic agencies. A major premise of our investigation is that SHEEOs operate at the intersection of competing values, academic and political, and that they seldom are able to satisfy the proponents of either. Indeed, if they were pure advocates of the academic persuasion they quickly would lose credibility with the political branches of government. Or, if they were to promote only the political values of state government, as implied by a recent Carnegie report (1982), they would have no legitimacy among the campuses and the history of state governance and coordination of higher education would arguably be quite different from what it has been.

This constant imperative to maintain both academic legitimacy and political credibility, in the absence of either an academic or a political constituency, is what we believe distinguishes the state higher education executive officer from other administrators or executives in either academia or government. These men and women are "combat leaders without troops" who live on the diplomatic minefield between the often hostile camps of academe and government.

The pointed neglect of these officials in the literature of academic leadership, and by contrast the profound attention being given the campus presidency, provides an additional impetus for our undertaking PEGASUS, and causes us to conjecture at the outset about some differences in the job circumstances of SHEEOs and campus presidents.

It is likely that the campus president has several advantages which make his job easier and in some respects more attractive than that of the system or state executive officer. Not the least of these is a higher degree of role consensus. Nearly everyone knows what the president is. The expectations of him, while rigorous, are nonetheless relatively predictable and uniform. His standing on the campus and in the community is relatively automatic and secure. He has countless opportunities for favorable and neutral visibility to soften the private and public criticism he may receive. The president enjoys perquisites and amenities commensurate with the position, which enables him to promote himself as well as his office and institution. The president is unmistakably the leader of a particular institution, and is allowed the luxury of promoting the best interests of that institution even at the expense of the public interest. Correspondingly, he has a power base (students, faculty, alumni, townspeople, local legislators, local news media) that he can mobilize when the institution is endangered (or can be portrayed as being endangered) by an external force (which may be the system head or state executive officer).

The state higher education coordinating officer enjoys none of these advantages, and the system head possesses few of them. Certainly no one confuses loyalty to them with loyalty to an institution. We would expect that their charge to take into account the public interest, and their need to be objective in reviewing the aspirations of competing campuses, leaves them without fervent friends and allies, and in fact makes them suspect in the eyes of the loyal supporters of individual colleges and universities (Millett, 1984). Public confusion over the definition of their role may mean that they do not receive the acknowledgment that campus presidents do

as social, cultural, or intellectual leaders of the community. They have no natural constituencies to rally behind them in times of need. Government generally looks on them as part of the academic establishment; academics may look on them as state bureaucrats. Usually -- unlike campus presidents -- they do not continue to hold tenure on the faculty while serving in their administrative posts, and they do not have "retreat rights."

None of this is meant to imply that the campus presidency is a "soft" position. We know that it is not. But after considerable reflection we began our study with the expectation that we would find that while SHEEOs and campus presidents both experience many forms of stress and frustration, presidents enjoy compensating antidotes in the form of community recognition, life-style perquisites, supporting constituencies, professional prestige and other rewards that the SHEEO usually does not have.

Gordon Davies, Director of the State Council on Higher Education in Virginia and a leader of SHEEO, expressed the predicament to us in this way: "SHEEO positions are especially draining because they do not involve any reciprocal benefits. We give, but we do not get. The flow of energy seems to me to be from me, but rarely to me. As a result, we are not renewed or refreshed."

Another of the more reflective SHEEOs, Kenneth Ashworth, Commissioner of Higher Education in Texas, describes the character of the position as follows: "The major expectations placed upon persons in these positions are to resolve tensions, to mediate conflicting wants, and to match aspirations against resources. Align this against universities that have been conditioned since medieval days and presidents nurtured since

acquiring their advanced degrees to be 'holier than thou,' and there is much ground for disagreement. To function effectively in such a position, one must accept as fact that one person's reasoned position may be another person's absurdity. Since university positions carry greater salaries and amenities and have more prestige and support than state agencies, and since universities believe strongly in their autonomy and preach the sacredness of knowledge, some presidents bring an air of condescension to the jousting ground as well. The job requires tolerance, perspective, and a sense of humor. And one would do well to stand on the high ground and avoid envy, pettiness, and a sense of self importance."

As a final hypothesis justifying our inquiry, we would expect that many of the pressures on campus presidents (within the public sector) have been reduced to the extent that they have been displaced to system heads and SHEEOs. Accordingly, we believe that as the presidency becomes a little more routine and ministerial, attention logically ought to shift to where final executive authority reposes.

RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to address the fundamental questions raised above, as well as some additional ones mentioned below, PEGASUS includes a variety of aggregate and survey data sets. Information about the statewide executive officers, alumni of such posts, and board members has been developed primarily through questionnaires, distributed with endorsement from the SHEEO organization. Response rates for both incumbents and alumni are currently over 90 percent and we have now passed the 50 percent mark (which may be close to the upper limit) on responses from the most

difficult participants (who are nowhere enumerated) -- the state board members. In addition, board members from nearly all states are represented in the study.

Data regarding the agency and the chief executive officer position include the following:

1. How well powers and responsibilities are understood by a variety of constituencies and the public.
2. How various state officials and others (including legislators, governor, campus presidents, faculty, the media, etc.) identify the position and what they see as its peer position (e.g., campus president, state agency head, the governor's staff) according to the perspective of the executive officer.
3. Responsibilities and characteristics of the agency, relative time devoted by the executive officer to main duties, formal and informal powers in a wide range of areas, and the levels at which various controls are exercised or imposed on higher education by different state agencies.
4. The relative importance of various tasks, and importance of personal attributes, and functional expertise in job performance.
5. Representational role relationships, i.e., the extent to which SHEEOs are "agents" for their various client groups (universities, governor, legislators, et al.), and the extent to which clients expect higher education executive officers to be their agents.
6. Leadership and management style, and the role of "politics" in decision-making.

7. Personal concerns over various categories of job satisfaction and sources of stress and frustration in job performance.

The key measures of board attributes as perceived by the higher education executive officer include the following:

1. Role orientations, including perceived representational indentities.
2. Board conflict and consensus respecting important policy signals to the executive.
3. The style of board decision-making; staff-board tensions; the degree to which the board lends credence to different sources of criticism of the executive; board consideration of conflicting perspectives between the SHEEO and campus chief executive officers (including who wins in which policy domain); and the degree of politicization of board decision-making.
4. Perceived importance of various criteria for appointments to the board.

The next set relates to external relationships and various actors in the state political system.

1. Factors contributing to good relationships between the "agency" and the legislative and executive branches of state government.
2. Political support for decisions from various sources.
3. The relative decision-making influence of the governor, legislature, university campuses, and professional associations in relation to a variety of policy matters.
4. Patterns of communication between relevant actors in the higher education policy system.
5. Trends in the exercise of gubernatorial and legislative control.

6. The extent to which the legislature and governor depend on various higher education leaders as sources of information.
7. SHEEO leadership styles with regard to legislative-executive relations.

Another set of questions deals primarily with campus relations.

1. Perceived comparisons between the role of campus president and state higher education executive officer.
2. The nature of working relationships between SHEEOs and the campuses.
3. The division of state and campus roles in the accreditation process.

The final set of variables relates to professional background, career, and personal characteristics.

1. Perception of future career options and views on various issues facing higher education.
2. Professional and personal background, professional mobility, job security, recruitment pathways, selection process, and retention strategies.
3. Policies and practices about job performance reviews.

A substantial number of the above characteristics are also measured for alumni SHEEOs, i.e., those individuals who have previously occupied a statewide higher education position. There is a similar but less comprehensive set of measures for governing board members.

Additional features are of interest to us, especially the relationships between the formal characteristics of these agencies and the behavior and attitudes within and around them, as well as the

connection between organization and behavior of such agencies on the one hand and, on the other, the economic and demographic characteristics of the states and the substance of their higher education policy. It is here where the study takes on slightly more conventional overtones from the comparative state public policy literature. As a consequence of these interests, we compiled additional data sets on all states: formal (legal) powers and authority of the postsecondary agencies, agency history, size and complexity of state higher education systems, and board composition as prescribed by law.

These aggregate data are complemented by a variety of demographic measures; assessments of state financial capacity; expenditure, income and financial data on pre and postsecondary education; enrollment data; state political characteristics reflecting competition and political tension, as well as political culture; and various dimensions of legislative and gubernatorial power.

The comprehensive measures resulting from PEGASUS should enable us to answer most important questions one might have regarding the structure and behavior of statewide higher education operations. We will be able to relate behavior and perspectives in these roles to structural arrangements and formal powers, which reflect a range of diversity in the American states. Although our primary purpose is not to assess performance, but rather to test relationships, the project nevertheless should provide a variety of results which have utility to practitioners.

FINDINGS

One of our central lines of inquiry relates to the development of various roles for the executive officer as shaped by his own orientation and his perception of expectations from relevant others. These role dimensions are broadly conceived to include a fundamental set of orientations toward task performance, formal responsibilities, representation, leadership, expertise, and decision referents. This cluster is reviewed immediately below, followed by explicit attention to basic types of role strains and incongruences and various political characteristics bearing on role in the context of campus, legislative, and executive relationships. These data are essentially descriptive, and they reflect the contours of executive officer positions beyond those which may be formally defined by law. This particular analysis treats only one segment of the measures applied to the data collected on incumbent SHEEOs. These components are substantially complete, with only a handful of SHEEOs yet to respond.

Fundamental Role Orientations and Task Performance

Although subsequent analyses will test hypotheses of the inter-relationships between features of executive positions and the types of organizational milieux in which they operate, here we illuminate several descriptive findings. These include SHEEO assessments of the relative importance of certain tasks to their position, the responsibilities of the position as defined by executive officers, the preferred role of the board vis-a-vis the agency, preferences and constraints associated with leadership initiatives, assessments of perceived differences in the legitimacy of SHEEOs and campus presidents, and perceived influences on decisions made by occupants of agency and board roles.

Task Importance. An important aspect of role conception is one's definition of significant tasks associated with it. In order to identify the most important tasks as seen by SHEEOs, we asked them to identify the top three in importance from among a larger set of responsibilities. This measure provides a rank ordering, or hierarchy, of tasks. Our data indicate that the three most critical tasks, in order of importance, are 1) to articulate the needs of higher education to the public and political decision makers; 2) to provide the governor and legislature with reliable data and projections; and 3) to formulate and update a master plan for state higher education. Although there are obvious other administrative tasks attendant to the provision of data and to the development of master plans, we believe it is important to note the political commonalities here. The most important task is obviously one of political articulation, and the others also involve substantial political interaction and important political adjustments in relation to the campuses.

On the other hand, those tasks least likely to be mentioned in the top three include (in descending order of importance): ensuring higher education access to minorities and nontraditional students; relating appropriation requests to state fiscal capacity; ensuring cost effectiveness on the campuses; ensuring program quality; preventing unwanted growth and duplication; and ensuring adequate funding for faculty salaries, research and public service. Although this list is not without political overtones, it is clear that primary leadership roles are defined largely in political terms, whereas those of somewhat less importance involve fiscal, moral, and academic functions. The data, therefore, offer us a first glimpse of the predominance and pervasiveness of political adjustment functions in performance of the SHEEO role.

Responsibilities. To further develop a hierarchy of performance functions, we requested respondents to rank a set of four responsibilities according to their relative importance to the SHEEO role. The mean ranks for each are as follows: political and governmental relations (1.9), planning (2.0), administration and management (2.2), and academic leadership (3.1). This ordering suggests a hierarchy ranging from the political to the administrative to the academic. For this and other orientations discussed here, we expect that later in our analysis we may find interesting differences between state governing board executives and coordinating board administrators. For now, these aggregate figures allow us to highlight the centrality of political and governmental relations in the general performance of these difficult roles in agencies which inescapably are intermediaries between the legislative and executive branches on the one hand, and the academic campuses on the other. The rank ordering suggests that such political mediation is an inherent characteristic of the post.

Representational Roles. The intermediate policy position of these agencies raises questions about the extent to which roles are perceived in representational terms, e.g., representing the public interest by balancing higher education needs with those of state government, representing the needs of state government and communicating them to higher education, or representing higher education and communicating those needs to state government and the public. In order to give meaning to these representational features, we asked the executive officers which of these describes the most appropriate role of their board in terms of the interests it represents. It is clear that roles are sufficiently institutionalized and that sufficient academic socialization is in place to

prevent a representational role which emphasizes the needs of state government and the communication of those needs to higher education. In other words, none of the respondents saw the most appropriate role for the board as primarily representative of state government. Nevertheless, they divided approximately 60-40 on the other two roles, i.e., 59% saw representation of the public interest as primary and 41% viewed their preferred board role as representative of higher education. This divergence of representational role orientations is of critical importance and it provides useful distinctions which should serve quite well our more extended analysis in which we distinguish between different types of boards. Moreover, this begs a comparison to board members' own perceptions of their preferred role (indeed, our preliminary analysis of board member data suggests a precise reversal in these percentages).

Leadership Initiative. An executive officer's approach to leadership is another fundamental component of role. The extent to which leaders perceive themselves as preferring to take, and are free to take, initiatives casts light on perceived role constraints and on the degree to which roles are institutionalized. In order to measure this dimension, we asked respondents to select from among several statements which best describe their approach to their jobs. As an indication of style and degree of practical authority, over half (55%) prefer to take higher education initiatives in proposing charge and reform in the state's higher education system as they perceive the need, and say that they are essentially able to do that. Approximately one third (34%) prefer to take such initiatives, but they claim they are usually in a circumstance where they have to react to initiatives from the campuses. These findings suggest relative freedom for leadership activities, especially when only

11% claim to be in circumstances of essentially having to react to campus initiatives and preferring to do so stylistically. The SHEEO role is perceived to have broad leadership boundaries and it is obviously not seen as a delegate role or in reactionary ways -- they view themselves as proactive leaders.

Patterns of Legitimacy. The legitimacy of the SHEEO position is defined not only by law and personal role preferences, but by perceptions of comparative legitimacy vis-a-vis campus presidents . In order to measure this component across various competencies and policy domains, we asked executive officers the extent to which their board valued their expertise (not how it should, but how it does) in comparison to that of campus presidents, especially in the context of conflicting testimony or recommendations. Nearly all (91%) claimed to be more highly valued for their master planning expertise than campus presidents, but substantial majorities also felt they were more respected with regard to (in order of importance) financial and budgetary judgments (78%), knowledge of national trends and practices (72%), and political judgment (67%). Furthermore, 63% thought they were respected about the same as presidents for their academic judgment. Although reality could be distant from these perceptions, the perceptions themselves are of importance to us. The vast majority of SHEEOs obviously believe that their professional legitimacy in the eyes of their own boards is secure. But we are intrigued by the fact that as many as 33% do not believe that their own boards value their political judgment more than that of campus presidents. There are obviously some discrepencies between the extent to which their political judgment is viewed as valuable and the centrality of political skills and tasks associated with their position. In addition, the academic leadership role is further defined by the fact that only 26% thought they were more

respected than presidents for their academic judgment. The pattern of these responses surely warrants further investigation as the project unfolds.

Decision Influence. Although our interest in the sources of influence on board and agency decision-making will be a primary focus for subsequent analysis, we intend at this stage to delineate the perceived importance of the governor, legislators, and the colleges/universities in budgetary and policy matters. Although some could argue that such matters might be viewed as tangential to fundamental role orientations, it is essential to begin to delineate the relevant influences of other actors as they relate to the SHEEO role. In general terms covering both the executive officer and the board, and from the perspective of the executive officer, the primary sources of influence on budgetary matters are the governor and legislators (of about equal importance), more so than the universities. Nevertheless, on major policy matters and policy changes, SHEEOs claim that the campuses outstrip the legislature and the governor. This finding is consistent with our expectations about the centrality of political relationships to financial matters in the American states.

Political Roles and Tasks

Role relationships in statewide coordination and administration of higher education obviously are complex and varied. Yet we have seen above how fundamental role orientations and understandings of task performance strongly suggest the primacy of the political dimension of the role. Note the importance of political and governmental relations to the position, representation of the public interest, wide latitude for leadership initiative, and the importance of gubernatorial-legislative relations in

important policy domains. To further flesh out the political dimensions of role, we inquired specifically about preferred political roles, board selection and decision-making style, and the extent of legislative and executive involvement in higher education.

Preferred Political Role. It occurred to us that chief executive officers, their staff, and their board could select from among two general competing perspectives on the role of politics: a preference for making decisions in isolation from political pressures in order that they be more "rational" and "objective", or a preference for decisions which result from political testing and compromise in order that they be more "realistic." In addition, we sought to measure variations in these perspectives according to two fundamental definitions of "political": one in the larger sense, involving the governor, legislature, political parties, and interest groups, and the other in terms of competing demands and aspirations within the academic community of the state. With these definitions and alternatives in mind, we asked the SHEEO respondents for their personal preferences about the role of politics in the kinds of decisions made by them, their staff, and their board, both in the larger sense and in more specific terms of competing demands within the academic community.

Their responses produced substantial divergence in preferred political roles; indeed, we witnessed the maximum variation possible in relation to these dichotomies. Where politics is defined in the broadest sense, involving the governor, legislature, political parties, and interest groups, approximately half (49%) prefer decisions made on more rational or analytical, non-political grounds, while a similar proportion (51%) actually preferred a political testing and compromise style. Similarly, respondents split evenly on the preferred role for politics defined as

competing demands within the academic community -- approximately half (49%) preferring an apolitical strategy and the other half (51%) preferring a political one. These fundamental differences in perspectives lead us to expect, through subsequent analysis, important findings about the impact of personal characteristics and organizational features on preferred style.

Board Selection and Decision-Making. Respondents were asked to characterize the importance of a wide range of considerations perceived to be potentially relevant in the selection of new board members. We had no reason to expect that board selection was perceived to be insulated from politics, yet it is clear that several factors directly related to politics were seen as predominant. We provided respondents with a long list of possible appointment considerations and asked them to gauge their importance using a three-point scale ranging from "very important" to "relatively unimportant". Recognizing that the categorical distinctions may be only impurely quantitative, nevertheless we have used mean evaluations as an initial indicator of the hierarchy of considerations. From the perspective of the chief executive officers, the most important factors in board appointment include the following, in order of importance: "politics" or appointee's relationship to the governor (1.6); status in the community or state (1.6); time and willingness to serve (1.7); sex balance (1.9); interest in and knowledge of higher education (1.9); and racial composition (2.0). Although time and willingness to serve is clearly a practical consideration, as is interest in higher education, relationships to the governor, status position in the community, and race and sex composition factors all have specific political meaning, especially in comparison to those factors which are viewed as less important: leadership skills (2.1), financial skill (2.2), knowledge of state government (2.4),

identification with a particular university (2.6), and fund-raising capability (2.9).

We also requested executive officers to place their board generally on a continuum (ranging from 1 through 5) where the extremes are represented by an apolitical board that nearly always decides on the basis of "what is best for higher education" and leaves it to the governor and legislature to make the political adjustments, to the other extreme of a highly political board that nearly always makes political considerations an important element in its decision-making. Although no respondents chose the extreme "highly political" category, the mean response fell close to the midpoint (2.4) and just to the apolitical side of it. Although the perceived weight is in the apolitical direction, there are obviously many states which are viewed to have politicized boards, and equally important, even if boards are viewed as doing what is best for higher education (leaving political adjustments largely to the governor and legislature) the chief executive officer obviously plays a major part in seeking political adjustments.

Legislative and Executive Involvement. To develop further the fundamental characteristics of legislative-executive-agency/board relationships, we developed a rather extensive set of measures on sociometric patterns. Although interesting variations may exist from board to board, generally we found a relatively high degree of direct involvement through patterns of interaction.

Over the normal course of events, disregarding crisis situations, we asked executive officers how often they personally had telephone or face-to-face contact with legislative and executive branch leaders while carrying out their official duties. This was measured across five

categories to include daily, weekly, monthly, less than monthly, and almost never. Over half the SHEEOs (52%) claim to have such telephone or face-to-face contacts with the governor on a monthly basis or more frequently, and over half (56%) report weekly or daily contact with his staff. On the legislative side, there are even higher frequencies, although this may be partially attributed to the wider set of possibilities for contact given the number of persons involved. Over one third (40%) report weekly or daily contact personally with legislators, and over one half (59%) claim weekly or daily contact with legislative staff.

Since the political context of legislative-executive relations appears to be important for the routine operation of postsecondary agencies, and given the intermediary role of these offices, we were curious about reciprocal influence trends on both the legislative and gubernatorial side. Over three fourths (77%) of the executive officers claimed their legislature has become more involved with higher education over the last decade; over half believe their board has become more influential with the legislature, and over one third of them believe their influence with the legislature has either decreased or remained the same. Similarly, nearly three fourths report the governor has become more involved in higher education, while just over half see the board's influence on the governor as having increased. While executive officers are relatively optimistic and politically efficacious, nevertheless, gubernatorial and legislative involvement in higher education has obviously heightened.

Role Strain

As we have elaborated previously, the opportunity for role strain and significant incongruencies abound in the position of statewide higher education executive officer. These may be characterized by internal conflicts and by those involving relationships with significant others. When role is conceptualized as one's own expectations coupled with expectations and preferences of individuals with whom one interacts, a wide range of factors contribute both to defining a role and determining the conflicts associated with it (Kirkpatrick and Pettit, 1972:72-80; Kirkpatrick and McLemore, 1977). In addition to being formally defined, roles are perceptually based and differentiation in these perceptions leads often to role dissensus. Below we examine these fundamental tensions for our respondents in terms of perceived understanding others have of their powers and responsibilities, peer group identifications, and board relationships.

Perceived Understanding of Responsibilities by Significant Others. The legitimacy of role or the institutionalization of position is partially defined by the level of understanding of the position others are perceived to have or do have. Significant strain may result when others with whom one interacts in an official capacity do not understand the responsibilities of one's position or the grounds for its authority. In order to assess this condition, we asked SHEEOs how well they thought the powers and responsibilities of their position are understood by an array of others to whom they relate. Our finding suggests a perceived hierarchy of understanding, with substantial variation among a variety of referent groups which help define the SHEEO role. That hierarchy is as follows, with the percentage of SHEEOs reporting "very good" or "good"

understanding shown paranthetically: members of the board (100%), governor (94%), campus administrators (94%), legislators (79%), news media (53%), faculty (22%), students (2%), and the general public (2%). In other words, the concentric circles of perceived understanding, surely reflected in sociometric patterns, cluster the board, governor, and campus administrators in the highest category, followed by more intermediate positions for legislators and the media, and very low levels of understanding by faculty, students, and the public. As one moves outward across these three clusters, the figures suggest some degree of frustration in dealing with the media, and substantial conflict potential between the highly decentralized governance perspective of faculty and students on the one hand, and the SHEEO mission on the other.

Peer Group Identifications. In order to measure the most fundamental tensions in role, we requested respondents to select the peer group with which they identify as best approximated from the following categories: presidents of colleges/universities or their multicampus systems, heads of major divisions/agencies of state government, and top-level staff in the governor's office. This was followed by a battery of items which measured how these groups in turn were perceived to identify the SHEEO position - in other words, the extent to which the SHEEO position is identified with that of university president or state agency head or governor's staff by the presidents, the governor and his staff, and state agency heads. Additional measures were obtained for perceived identifications by faculty, the public, and the legislature and its staff. Our purpose here is to measure the degree of dissonance between the category of peers in which the SHEEOs place themselves and the categories in which they think others place them.

A majority of SHEEOs think that others identify their position as a state agency head. That is, executive officers believe the following groups/individuals see their position as that of state agency head, in the following order: faculty (62%), news media (57%), legislature and its staff (57%), general public (56%), governor and staff (54%), university presidents (53%), and state agency heads (53%). Very importantly, however, over half of the executive officers (60%) personally identify their preferred peer group as campus presidents (even though over half - 53% - believe university presidents perceive them as state agency heads). Similarly, while only approximately one third (36%) identify their peer group as state agency heads, over half of them (53%) believe that state agency heads see them as bureaucratic colleagues. Only a few executive officers (4%) identify with the governor's top-level staff and only 12% believe the governor and his staff identify the position as such. In sum, a majority of respondents believe all referent groups view them as state agency heads, while just over one third (36%) personally identify with these other executive branch positions. This may be one variable on which we shall find substantial differences between governing board and coordinating board executives later in our analysis.

Since the possibility for serious individual role conflict or strain remains high, we attempted to measure this more precisely by comparing individual-level peer group preferences with SHEEO perceptions of how university presidents, state agency heads, and the governor and his staff identify the position. The results for all valid cases are shown in the attached tables. Although the predominant pattern is one of perceived congruence between individual preferences and perceptions of others preferences (as evidenced along table diagonals), critical incongruities

are present, which further suggests the nature of fundamental role strains for these individuals. For example, among the large group of executive officers who personally identify with campus presidents, 43% believe the university presidents identify them with state agency heads. An intriguing finding is that 24% of those personally identifying with state agency heads believe that campus presidents regard them as one of their own (Table 1). Those who see themselves as state agency heads exhibit high congruence with how they think state agency heads view them (Table 2). In addition, the absence of a role identity with the governor's staff is clear, but role strain is surely high among those who see their peer group as presidents when the governor and his staff are perceived to view them as state agency heads (41%, Table 3). In subsequent analysis we will relate these individual role strains to type of SHEEO agency and attitudinal and behavioral factors associated with the SHEEO position.

Potential Board Conflict. While an assessment of conflict patterns between SHEEOs and their boards requires extensive attention to data collected from board members, there are some fundamental role strains which may be detected from the SHEEOs alone. One component of this potential strain relates to peer group identification by executive officers in the context of preferred representational roles for the board. One might normally hypothesize high congruence between peer identity with campus presidents and a preferred board role which favors the representation of higher education. Similarly, we might expect to find a relationship between a tendency to identify with state agency heads and governor's staff and a preference for a board representational role favoring the public interest (balancing the needs of higher education with those of state government). Nevertheless, these expectations break down on empirical examination.

Surprising to us, among those SHEEOs who see campus presidents as their peer group, 61% believe the most appropriate role for their board is to represent the public interest (rather than higher education), and among those preferring to identify with state agency heads, 56% prefer their board to represent higher education (Table 4). This provides further evidence for arguing the complexity of chief executive officer roles, and suggests that our subsequent analysis may have to comprehend an array of variables not yet alluded to at this point in our discussion. Alternatively, a presidential identification may denote a more sophisticated orientation which encompasses the public interest, as opposed to that of state agency head identity which may be operationalized more simplistically or mechanically in terms of clientele representation. Finally, we may speculate that those SHEEOs who identify with the presidency as a peer role come from the academic tradition that sees no distinction between the public interest and the interests of higher education, and opt for the loftier sounding alternative, while those who identify as state agency heads reflect more of a political background and a more cynical orientation to the public interest - not as an abstract value, but as the net result of interest group politics. Further analysis may add clarity to this picture, but in general terms we can conclude the potential for strain is high.

While there are many indicators of additional tension, one must obviously relate to the levels of cooperation perceived to exist between the state office and campuses under its jurisdiction. For example, we have found that while approximately two thirds (67%) of the executive officers report, in general terms, that the campuses are cooperative and accept the need for coordination (which is consistent with most legal definitions, but

conceivably an empirical misperception), the remaining third admit to various problems of resentment and attempts at policy circumvention, especially on the part of flagship institutions.

CONCLUSION

After having given attention to only one segment of our analytical and theoretical concerns, we see patterns emerging to suggest the primacy of political roles, significant legislative and executive branch interaction, substantial variation in types of political roles, wide latitude for leadership initiative, and divergent perspectives on the representation of various interests. Equally important, there is considerable evidence to indicate a variety of fundamental role strains and conflicts inherent in this "intermediary" position as postulated.

In addition to these topics, there are many others which will focus on these "combat leaders without troops" as we proceed with our inquiry. Where do they come from? What particular talents best serve them? Do they enjoy a wide variety of professional satisfactions and opportunities, or are these "dead end" jobs? What are the sources of frustration and stress associated with their positions? Are there differences in the recruitment pathways, academic values, self concepts, and identity with the academic community between governing board and coordinating board executives? What strategies best serve them in relation to governors, legislatures, and campuses? What impact do they have on such higher education issues as access, quality and cost-effectiveness? Are they and their boards critical actors in the policy-making process? As we address these and other questions, we shall of course seek to relate our findings to those of recent studies of both campus presidents and state government executives.

If indeed these state-level higher education executives dwell on the dangerous minefield between academe and government, we need to know what life in that habitat is like; to ignore that terrain is to forego an understanding of what we suspect is the critical linkage in state policy-making for higher education.

Table 1

COMPARISON OF SHEEO-DEFINED PEER GROUPS TO PERCEPTIONS OF HOW UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS IDENTIFY SHEEO POSITION

SHEEO-Defined Peer Group	University Presidents Identify SHEEO with ... Presidents	St. Agency Heads	Gov's Staff	Total %(N)
Presidents	57%	43%	--	100(28)
State Agency Heads	24%	76%	--	100(17)
Governor's Staff	--	--	100%	100(2)

Table 2

COMPARISON OF SHEEO-DEFINED PEER GROUPS TO PERCEPTIONS OF HOW STATE AGENCY HEADS IDENTIFY SHEEO POSITIONS

SHEEO-Defined Peer Group	State Agency Heads Identify SHEEO with ... Presidents	St.Agency Heads	Gov's Staff	Total %(N)
Presidents	61%	39%	--	100(28)
State Agency Heads	12%	88%	--	100(17)
Governor's Staff	--	--	100%	100(2)

Table 3

COMPARISON OF SHEEO-DEFINED PEER GROUP TO PERCEPTIONS OF HOW THE GOVERNOR AND HIS STAFF IDENTIFY SHEEO POSITION

SHEEO-Defined Peer Group	Governor and His Staff Identify SHEEO with ... Presidents	St. Agency Heads	Gov's Staff	Total %(N)
Presidents	52%	41%	7%	100(29)
State Agency Heads	6%	88%	6%	100(17)
Governor's Staff	--	--	100%	100(2)

Table 4

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SHEEO-DEFINED PEER GROUP AND MOST APPROPRIATE REPRESENTATIONAL ROLE FOR BOARD

	Board Representational Role		
SHEEO Peer Group	Public Interest	Higher Education	Total %(N
Presidents	61%	39%	100(28)
State Agency Heads	44%	56%	100(16)
Governor's Staff	100%	--	100(2)

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